



Sarawak is Malaysia's largest state, located on the northwestern side of the island of Borneo.

Home to an incredible diversity of tropical flora and fauna and an exciting mix of cultures, religions and traditions, Sarawak is an ideal destination for travelers seeking an authentic "jungle" experience with a variety of nature, culture and adventure tourism offerings.

Sarawak, with its low crime rate, good health system, modern infrastructure and absence of natural disasters, renders the "jungle" experience pleasant and accessible to all, with levels of comfort ranging from backpacker hostels to luxury resorts...even in the jungle!

Sarawak is easily accessible by frequent short haul flights from Kuala Lumpur and other major Malaysian cities, as well as direct flights from Singapore, Brunei, Australia (Perth), Indonesia (Pontianak), Philippines (Manila) and Hong Kong.

Internally, Sarawak is well serviced by a network of air, road and river transportation to all corners of the state.

No particular vaccinations are required, climate is warm and humid year round, with increased rainfall from November to February, English is widely spoken, credit cards are widely accepted and electric current is 220V.

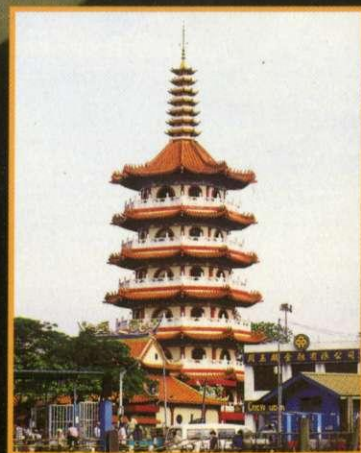
Either visited on its own, or in combination with the rest of Borneo, with West Malaysia or with other South East Asian destinations, Sarawak offers a truly unforgettable travel experience!

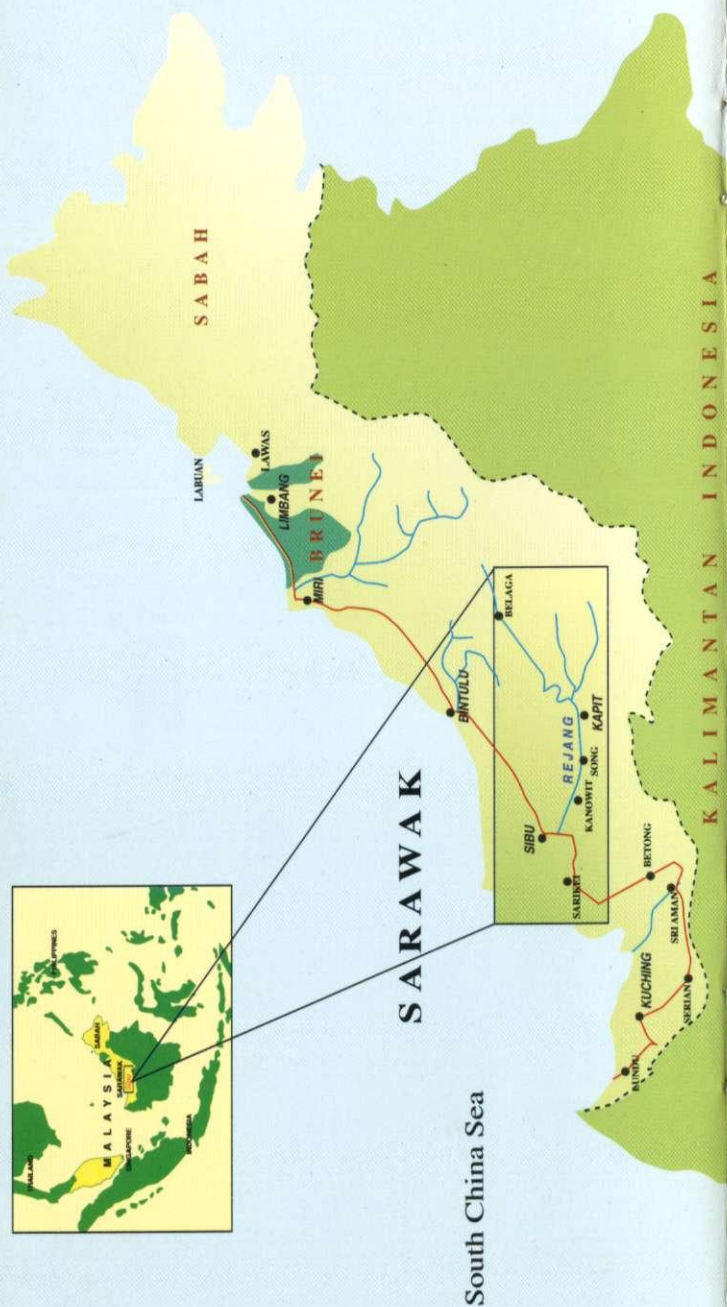
*To know more about Sarawak, Borneo's Hidden Paradise,
please contact:*

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e-mail: sarawak@po.jaring.my
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<http://www.sarawaktourism.com>

SIBU

& the REJANG





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SIBU AND THE REJANG

INTRODUCTION

The trip along Rejang River is arguably one of Southeast Asia's most rewarding travel experiences. A lifeline to the people of the vast hinterland, the river is alive with boats, people and cargo. From the thriving port of Sibu to deep into Sarawak's vast interior, the Rejang offers visitors the chance to experience life on Malaysia's mightiest river.



The best way to get to know the Rejang is to embark on one of the World's last great river journey.

Malaysia's longest river, the Rejang is formed by the confluence of the Balui and Baleh Rivers, over 400 miles (640 km) from the coast. At this point it is already 200 m across, and by the time it reaches Sibu, which is still 80 miles (130 km) from the sea, it is nearly a mile (1.6 km) wide. The Rejang is the main highway for a host of different ethnic groups and societies, from the cosmopolitan citizens of prosperous Sibu to remote bands of hunter-gatherers living deep in the vast rainforest.



AN ETHNIC KALEIDOSCOPE

Along the banks of the Rejang and its tributaries, in towns, villages and longhouses, a great variety of people have made their home.

The Rejang delta, where the river spreads out before it meets the sea, is the heartland of the Melanau, intrepid fishermen who also cultivate the sago



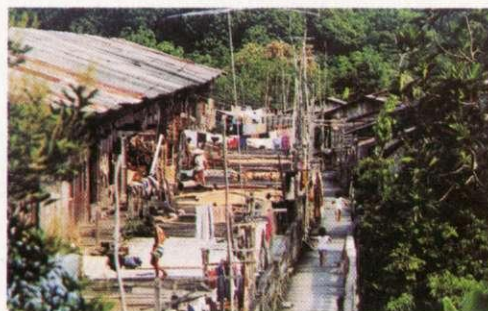
palm for its starch. Further up, the river is lined with Malay kampungs (villages) and padi fields as far as Sibu. The majority of Sibu's inhabitants are Foochow Chinese, descendants of the town's founders, who migrated from Southern China at the turn of the century to escape persecution and civil war.

Above Sibu, Chinese shophouses give way to Iban longhouses. The Rejang and its tributaries, the Katibas and the Baleh, have the



largest Iban population in Sarawak, a result of the great Iban migration of the 17th and 18th centuries. Beyond the Pelagus Rapids, Iban culture ceases to dominate and the longhouses of the

various Orang Ulu (upriver people) groups start to appear. At first there are just isolated settlements of Punan Bah and Kajang, but



above Belaga lies the heartland of the Kayan and Kenyah, the two great tribes of Borneo's interior, as well as many smaller Orang Ulu groups, including the Bukitan, Lahanan, Punan, Ukit and the semi-nomadic Penan. However, even this far from the main towns there are small settlements of Chinese in the bazaars and villages, descendants of bold and enterprising traders who risked life and limb opening up the 19th century Rejang to commerce.

SIBU

Sibu, 130 km from the South China Sea, is Sarawak's second largest town, the main port and commercial centre of the Rejang basin, and the starting point for exploring the river. Sibu



was founded at the turn of the century by Foochow migrants from Southern China, and is often referred to as 'New Foochow.' The town's Chinese roots are still very apparent, particularly the bustling waterfront, which is dominated by the beautiful **seven-storey Pagoda** and the century-old **Tua Pek Kong Temple**.

Sibu's town centre is very compact and is



crammed with countless small shops selling everything from chic designer fashions to indigenous handicrafts and Sarawak pottery. It also has the liveliest **pasar malam** (night market) in Sarawak, with hundreds of stalls offering everything from clothing to a wide variety of local delicacies such as stuffed dumplings, barbecued fish and duck and delicious Malay and Chinese cakes. Sit-down diners are also well catered for with a choice of hawker stalls, coffee shops, plush air-conditioned Chinese restaurants, hotel outlets and Western fast-food restaurants.

Sights worth seeing include the **Rejang Esplanade**, a landscaped waterfront park built on reclaimed land; the **SMC New Market**,



with 700 stalls selling exotic jungle produce and the **Civic Centre Museum**, which traces the history of Sibu and the Chinese migration, and also houses a fine collection of Iban and Orang Ulu handicrafts. Day trips from Sibu include visits to nearby **Iban longhouses** and **Malay kampungs** - contact local tour operators for details.

KAPIT

Anyone expecting a sleepy upriver town is in for a surprise when they arrive at Kapit. Although Kapit is situated halfway up the Rejang river and is accessible only by express boat or light aircraft, the town is a vibrant commercial and social centre, catering to the longhouse communities and timber camps further upriver. Kapit was founded by Rajah Charles Brooke as a garrison town to pacify the warring tribes and bring the Central Rejang under Brooke administration.



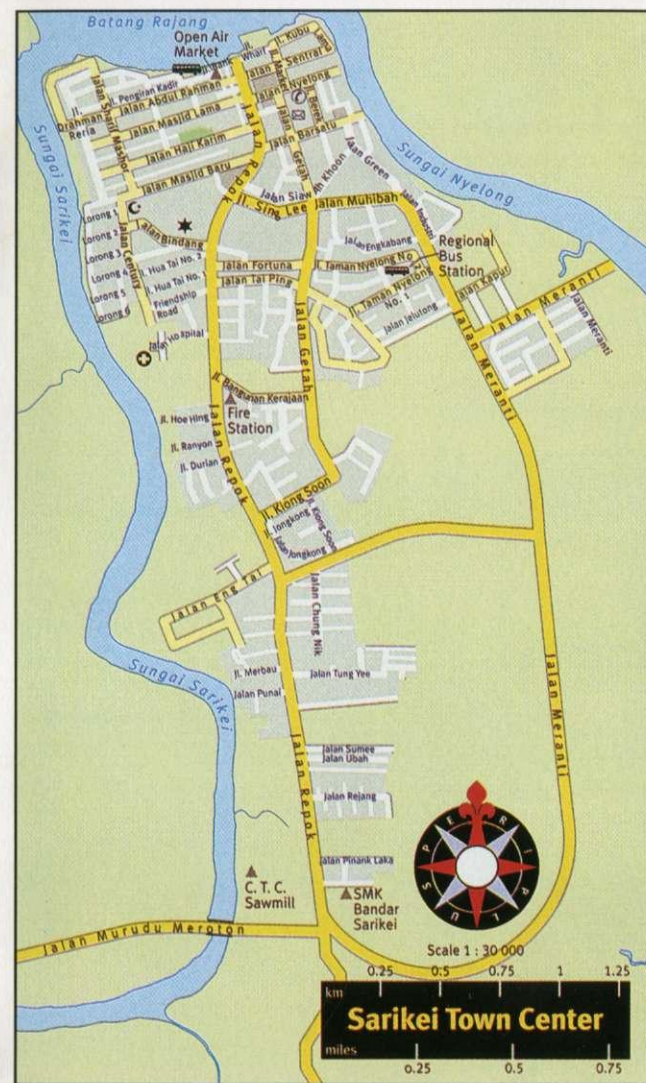
Kapit is an excellent base for exploring nearby Iban longhouses, and is the gateway for the Upper Rejang and the Baleh River. The town consists of a few main streets running along or parallel to the Rejang waterfront. The main landmark is **Fort Sylvia**, built by Charles Brooke in 1880. Other notable sights include the **day market** and the **Civic Centre Museum**, which houses a fine collection of ethnic arts and handicrafts, and evocative sketches and water-colours of life along the Rejang.



Kapit has plenty of simple but good Malay and Chinese restaurants. There are some excellent hawker stalls along Jalan Teo Chow Beng, as well as some of the world's remotest Western fast food outlets. Surprisingly, night life is plentiful, with a number of pubs offering karaoke and live music. First class handicrafts can be found in Kapit, and it is a good place to stock up on travellers requisites and provisions before proceeding further upriver.

SARIKEI

Sarikei, strategically located on the lower Rejang adjacent to the Pan Borneo Highway, is the main transit point for both buses and



express boats heading north or south throughout Sarawak. If you are travelling by road or express boat from Kuching to Sibu you are almost certain to pass through Sarikei, a bustling river town crammed with old Chinese shophouses. The town serves as the centre of administration for the Division of Sarikei which has a population of 130,000 and covers an area of approximately 7,000 square kilometres. Sarikei is famous for its pineapples which are mainly grown on the peat swamps of the Rejang area. Sarikei is also an important area for the cultivation of Sarawak pepper.

Getting There:

Sarikei is easily accessible from all major towns in Sarawak.

Road: There are regular air-conditioned bus services from Kuching, Sibul, Bintulu and Miri. Phone Biaramas Express (082-452139), Borneo Highway Express (082-427035) and P.B. Express 082-461277 in Kuching for full details. If you are driving yourself, Sarikei has good road links to all major towns in Sarawak.



Sea: Concorde Marine (082-412551) and Ekspress Bahagia (082-421948) both operate fast, regular Express Boat services from Kuching to Sarikei and onwards to Sibul.

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BELAGA

Belaga is the last town on the Rejang, a sleepy trading post and administrative centre, where residents of the upriver longhouses and villages come to trade, shop for provisions, or simply catch up with old friends. Surprisingly, Belaga has a number of good (if somewhat basic) restaurants and comfortable budget hotels. The basic rule



in the restaurants is very simple - don't specify what you want to eat, as they probably don't have it - just ask for the daily special, which is always fresh and superbly cooked.

The town is an excellent place to relax for a few days before proceeding upriver. There are few visitors, so strangers are usually made very welcome, and will often be invited along to any social occasions in the nearby longhouses.

EXPLORING THE REJANG

Although Kapit and Belaga can both be reached by MAS Twin Otter, the only way to really see and enjoy the Rejang is to travel by boat. The vast distances involved and the absence of roads have given rise to a form of transport unique to the Rejang, the **Express Boat**. These torpedo-shaped craft, styled like airliners and powered by thousand-horsepower engines, blast their way up and down the Rejang and its tributaries at speeds of over 60 km/h, their weather-beaten skippers treating rapids and mud-flats with equal disdain.



The express boats are the lifeline of the entire Rejang Basin, and are used by everybody who needs to travel, so you are bound to meet a cross section of Rejang society, from elderly Kayan grandmothers with their tattoos and elongated ears, to sophisticated Chinese businessmen balancing their laptop computers on their knees. The interior is comfortable, air-conditioned, and



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complete with "in-flight" movies, but for the adventurous, the best place to enjoy the scenery is perched on the roof, waving to other craft and catching a glimpse of life along the river.

The most exciting part of the upriver journey is the Pelagus Rapids. As you approach the rapids, a boatman will shoo all the rooftop passengers inside, as the boat ploughs into 1.6 km of fast, turbulent water and sharp, rocky outcrops. Before the introduction of express boats, passengers would have to disembark and walk through the forest to another boat on the other side, but nowadays the express boats glide through the rapids easily, the skipper skilfully positioning and manoeuvring his craft with sheer horsepower.

Remote longhouses are accessible only by outboard-powered longboat. Rejang longboats are narrow and highly manoeuvrable, so an experienced boatman can negotiate very narrow and difficult waters, but you should be prepared to climb out and help to push or carry the boat past a particularly tricky set of rapids. Upriver travel on the Rejang and its tributaries can be hard work at times, but it can provide visitors with fond memories that last a lifetime.

TRAVEL NOTES

Permits

Visitors travelling beyond Kapit (except to Pelagus Resort) will require a permit, available from the Resident's Office in Kapit. The office is in the State Government Complex (1st Floor) on Jalan Selirik, opening hours 8.00-12.45 and 2.00-4.30 Mon-Fri, 8.00-12.45 Sat. The process is a formality and there is no charge. Please bring your passport.



Visitors travelling beyond Belaga (except to nearby longhouses) will require an additional permit from the Government Office in Belaga (first building on the right from the jetty), opening hours 8.00-12.45 and 2.00-4.30 Mon-Fri, 8.00-12.45 Sat. The process is a formality and there is no charge. Please bring your passport.



GETTING THERE

SIBU

Sibu is easily accessible from all major towns in Sarawak.

Air: MAS has frequent Boeing 737 and Fokker 50 flights to Sibu from Kuching, Bintulu, Miri and Kota Kinabalu (Sabah). Phone MAS in Kuching (082-246622) for full details.



Road: There are regular air-conditioned bus services from Kuching, Sarikei, Bintulu and Miri. Phone Biaramas Express (082-452139), Borneo

Highway Express (082-427035) and P.B. Express (082-461277) in Kuching for full details. If you are driving yourself, Sibu has good road links to all major towns in Sarawak.

Sea: Concorde Marine (082-412551) and Ekspress Bahagia (082-421948) both operate fast, regular Express Boat services from Kuching to Sibu.



KAPIT

Air: MAS has a twice weekly Twin Otter flight from Sibü to Kapit and Belaga. Phone 082-246622 (Kuching) or 084-326166 (Sibü) for full details.

Express Boat: Express boats leave Sibü for Kapit (3-4 hours approx.) at roughly hourly intervals, starting around 5.45 am and finishing at 2.45 pm. Seats are not bookable, so please arrive half an hour before departure if you want to be sure of a seat.



BELAGA

Air: MAS has a twice weekly Twin Otter flight from Sibü to Kapit and Belaga. Phone 082-246622 (Kuching) or 084-326166 (Sibü) for full details.



Express Boat: Express boats leave Sibü for Belaga (7-9 hrs approx.) at about 6 am (and 9 am during the rainy season), stopping at Kapit. Seats are not bookable, so please arrive half an hour before

departure if you want to be sure of a seat. **Note:** boat times to Belaga can be very variable, depending upon demand and river conditions. Please check at the express wharf in Sibü before you travel.

Visiting the Longhouses

Unless you have an invitation or you know somebody at the longhouse, it is best to go with a guide or a tour operator. There are specialist tour operators in Sibü who are able to put



together very interesting and adventurous river safari packages. Contact the Sarawak Tourism Board for details. In Kapit and Belaga you can also enquire at hotels and coffee shops for guides (if they don't find you first) but ask to see their license or testimonial letters. Upriver longboat travel can be expensive, so it is best to travel in a group or join some locals who are heading in your direction.

The best places for visiting Iban longhouses are the Katibas river (from Kanowit - all Sibü-Kapit express boats stop here) and the Baleh river and its tributaries (from Kapit). Belaga is the ideal base for visiting the various Orang Ulu longhouses, as well as the dramatic mountain scenery of the wild Linau river.

Accommodation

Sibü has a wide choice of accommodation, including comfortable business-class hotels, small budget hotels and simple hostels.

Kapit & Sarikei has a good range of medium price and budget hotels, as well as the Longhouse-style Pelagus Resort at Pelagus Rapids. **Belaga** has a selection of simple but well appointed budget hotels. Visitors to



Longhouses will be offered accommodation with their host family, either in the family rooms or on the covered verandah. Expect to pay a modest sum for food and accommodation.



Up-to-date accommodation details are available from the Sarawak Tourism Board (see below).

FURTHER INFORMATION

For further information about Sarawak and its many attractions, please contact:

Sarawak Tourism Board

P.O. Box 2950,
93758 Kuching, Sarawak, Malaysia.
Tel: 60-82-423600 Fax: 60-82-416700
E-mail: sarawak@po.jaring.my
URL: <http://www.sarawaktourism.com>

Visitors' Information Centre Kuching

31, Jln Masjid, 93400 Kuching, Sarawak, Malaysia.
Tel: 6082-410944 Fax: 6082-256301

Visitors' Information Centre Sibü

#CDT 107, 32, Ground Floor, Cross Road, 96000 Sibü,
Sarawak, Malaysia.
Tel: 6084-340980 Fax: 6084-341280
E-mail: stbsibu@tm.net.my

Visitors' Information Centre Miri

Lot 452, Jalan Melayu, 98000 Miri,
Sarawak, Malaysia.
Tel: 6085-434180 Fax: 6085-434179
E-mail: stb@po.jaring.my

Visitors' Information Centre Limbang

Ground Floor, Limbang Plaza
P.O. Box 748
98708 Limbang, Sarawak, Malaysia.

Visitors' Information Centre Sibü



ADDRESS

CDT 107, 32, Ground Floor, Cross Road, 96000 Sibü,
Sarawak - MALAYSIA

HOW TO GET THERE

- From Sibü Airport
By bus : No 3A (every 60min), last stop (bus station)
By taxi : About 1/2 hour drive (fare: RM20)
- From Sibü Wharf
On foot: About 10min walk from the wharf (follow the signs)
By taxi : A short drive (Fare: RM4.00)

SERVICES

- General information on Sibü,
the Central Region and Sarawak in general.

OPERATING HOURS

Mon- Thu	- 0800 - 1630 hrs
Fri	- 0800 - 1645 hrs
Sat	- 0800 - 1245 hrs

Note : Open during lunch hours.

Close on Sunday & Public Holidays.

CONTACT NUMBERS

Tel: 60-84-340 980 Fax: 60-84-341- 280
e-mail : stbsibu@tm.net.my